

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE ORGANIC ADVISORY BOARD HANDBOOK

Revised October 2016

INTRODUCTION

The Washington State Department of Agriculture's (WSDA) Organic Advisory Board (OAB) was established in 1987 to advise WSDA concerning the implementation of the WSDA Organic Program and to provide a forum for Washington State's organic industry to elevate issues and concerns to WSDA. The OAB consists of organic farmers, processors, handlers, material registrants, and other interested parties that meet on a regular basis to discuss the Organic Program and recommend policy to the WSDA Organic Program.

ORGANIC PROGRAM'S MISSION STATEMENT

WSDA Organic Program provides access to the organic market and ensures the integrity of the organic label through certification of producers and handlers, registration of inputs for use in organic production, and technical assistance on the USDA organic regulations.

ORGANIC ADVISORY BOARD MISSION STATEMENT

In the interest of continuous improvement, the WSDA Organic Advisory Board serves in support of WSDA Organic Program. The board's ambition is to ensure the Program's long term health and market viability by helping to maintain a long term financial plan, by helping to guide operational efficiencies, and by helping to support public awareness of and confidence in the WSDA Organic Program.

ORGANIC ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERSHIP

1. Each board member is appointed to a renewable three-year term.
2. The board shall consist of at least 12 members representing the following categories:
 - a) **Growers** –The majority of the board will be composed of growers, with a balance between large and small growers sought. Growers will represent the diversity of crops and livestock certified by WSDA. Growers will represent most agricultural areas of the state.
 - b) **Processors** –Processors of organic products
 - c) **Handlers** –Wholesalers, packers, distributors, and retailers of organic products
 - d) **Material Input Registrants** – Registrants of materials approved for use in organic production and handling
 - d) **Consumer** –Organic agriculture supporter
 - e) **Industry Supporter** –Supports organic agriculture from a related field
 - f) **Research & Education** –Supports organic agriculture through research and/or education
 - g) **Environmental** –Supports organic agriculture from an environmental field
 - h) **At-Large** –Additional members appointed by the OAB

Selection of Board Members

The OAB shall accept applications for new board members as vacancies occur, and provide recommendations to WSDA on new appointments. Upon recommendation by the OAB, the program staff will draft appointment letters for the WSDA Director's approval and signature.

Board Chair Qualifications and Terms

Board Chair candidates must have at least one year experience on the board prior to serving as Chair. Board Chair serves a two-year term, elected by the majority of the board members present at time of election, and may serve successive terms.

Vice Chair Qualifications and Terms

Board Vice Chair candidates must have at least one year experience on the board prior to serving as the Vice Chair. Vice Chair serves a one-year term, elected by the majority of board members present at time of election, and may serve successive terms, with no term limit.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE ORGANIC ADVISORY BOARD

1. Organic Advisory Board

- Schedule dates, times and locations for a minimum of two (2) meetings a year, alternating Between Eastern Washington and Western Washington locations (can include both in-person and telephone meetings)
- Approve meeting and operating procedures
- Define tasks to fulfill goals
- Respond to issues brought up by staff and other board members
- Elect a Chair and Vice Chair
- Form committees as needed
- Monitor and respond to changes of the NOP, foreign organic standards, and accreditation requirements
- Support the organic industry through outreach/involvement with stakeholders and other stakeholder organizations
- Provide input into positions and comments WSDA develops on emerging issues and regulations that affect the organic industry
- Recommend new board members

2. Decision Making

- Decision making will be by majority
- Roberts Rules will be followed
- Attendance by 50 percent or more of board members will be a quorum

3. **Organic Advisory Board Members**

- Read materials before meetings
- Attend meetings on time and well prepared
- Help with committee tasks
- If appropriate, chair a committee
- Direct public queries to the appropriate designated spokesperson
- Stand by the decisions of the OAB when talking to the public, though it is appropriate to voice one's own opinions if the distinction is made clear
- Bring issues of concern related to the Organic Program to the board
- Abide by the rules established by the Board
- Removal from the OAB may be invoked if a board member misses two (2) consecutive meetings without good reason and/or notice

Chair

- Facilitates all OAB meetings
- Works with Organic Program Manager to prepare meeting agendas
- Acts as the OAB spokesperson
- Calls emergency meetings when necessary
- Votes and makes motions
- Directs another member to act as the facilitator when necessary

Vice Chair

- Oversees committees and works with committee chairs to ensure that goals are being met
- Works with WSDA staff on issues that arise between meetings
- In the Chair's absence, facilitates OAB meetings

Committee Chair

- Works with WSDA staff and other board members to define goals, develop a time frame to accomplish goals, identify tasks, and determine who will accomplish them
- Reports to chair and staff on committee work
- Sets meetings and communicates with all committee members
- Responsible for committee minutes and all reports

4. **Expectations of WSDA staff**

- Distribute meeting materials to all OAB members in a timely manner
- Take, write and distribute minutes and any committee reports
- Arrange and plan for OAB meetings
- Reimburse members for travel and per diem expenses under WSDA protocol